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PRESS RELEASE

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District Man Pleads Guilty to Involuntary Manslaughter In September 2010 Slaying in Southeast Washington - Evidence Indicates He Did Not Intend to Shoot 21-Year-Old Victim -

WASHINGTON - Damon Sams, 23, pled guilty today to charges of involuntary manslaughter and possession of a firearm during a crime of violence in a slaying that took place in September 2010 in Southeast Washington, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced.

Sams, also known as "Milli" and "9-Milli," entered his guilty plea before the Honorable Gerald I. Fisher in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. Sams, of Washington, D.C., is to be sentenced on July 8, 2011. He faces up to 45 years of imprisonment, including a mandatory-minimum sentence of five years. Under the court's voluntary sentencing guidelines, the likely sentencing range is between five and 14 years in prison.

The government's evidence indicated that Sams did not intend to shoot the victim or discharge the firearm. According to the government's evidence, on September 18, 2010, at 3:30 a.m., Sams shot the victim, Ashley McRae, 21, once in the forehead while she was seated in the back seat on the driver's side of a car parked behind a building in the 2700 block of Bruce Place SE.

At the time of the shooting, Sams was standing in the space created by the open rear passenger door of the car, with a pistol in his hand. By his account, he was attempting to engage the safety on the pistol before getting into the car. He touched the trigger to see if the safety was on – while holding the pistol pointed into the car. A round discharged, killing the victim.

Sams already had fired the pistol that night, shortly before killing McRae, and no reasonable person could have thought it would be safe to touch the trigger with a pistol pointed in the direction of another person. Earlier that night, Sams had fired the pistol into the air out of anger at an incident at a club in Maryland, involving unrelated individuals.

In announcing today's guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen praised the work of the Metropolitan Police Department's Homicide Branch, Mobile Crime Laboratory and Seventh District detectives' office, as well as Assistant U.S. Attorneys Thomas (Pat) Martin, who investigated and obtained an indictment in the case, and Daniel Friedman, who obtained the guilty plea.

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